

“Our spirit exceedingly, the more so because the aforesaid Assyrians, as We have been informed, having rejected and abhorred their ancient (doctrinal) errors, have returned to the bosom of the Holy Roman Church. On this account trusting in Your exceptional goodwill towards Us demonstrated to Us by so many and such manifest signs, We ask Your Highness pressing for Our sake to be so good as to give orders that Our beloved sons the Assyrians, especially those of Isfahan, are treated more leniently. For We greatly desire that they should begin to perceive some fruit of their conversion and have some evidence of Our paternal love and the peculiar care and solicitude, with which We busy Ourselves for their welfare. Although We do not in the least doubt Your kindly regard for Us, and without any doubt hope that this Our letter will be of great assistance to those unfortunate people in approaching Your Highness, still, because fatherly affection can be restrained by no bounds in risks (threatening) one’s sons, We have further desired that Our beloved sons the Discalced Carmelite Religious, who attend to the salvation of the souls of the Christian faithful of Isfahan, should request this of You in Our name, and express to You in more detail with what great affliction of spirit We are affected on this account, and how You will have bound Us to You (by obligations) if, as We trust, You show Yourself complaisant to this Our request. . . .”

That Brief was accompanied by another of the same date (Arch. Vat. XLV, vol. 8, p. 61) addressed to the Carmelites at Isfahan to the effect that he, the Pope, had received a letter from the priest Hermes (? for Hurmuzd) relating his reconciliation to the Roman Church by the hands of the Assyrian George Grigor:

“but We wish Our letter to be handed” (i.e. to the Shah) “only if you consider it opportune: should you do so, then you should follow it up with an effective recommendation, for We ardently desire that (these) dear sons, the Assyrians, should experience the utility of their conversion in the material as well as the spiritual man.”

George Grigor had also brought to Rome a letter to the Pope from Ignatius, Patriarch of the Jacobites, to whom Paul V also replied on 3.11.1612, referring to

“that communion which Your predecessor, John, Patriarch of the Jacobites, through his envoy the Abbot of the monastery of St. Anthony of Egypt had with the Holy Roman Church 130 years ago in the reign of Eugenius IV . . .”,

and before returning to Persia George Grigor was created a knight of the ‘aurata militia’, according to a Brief addressed him on 25.11.1612 (Arm. XLV, vol. 8).

Following the Chapter General in Rome in May 1611 and the election of Fr. John of Jesus Mary as Praepositus General, two more recruits for the Persian mission were dispatched in the persons of Frs. Bartholomew Mary of S. Francis, a Neapolitan noble by extraction, and Louis Francis of the Mother of God, a Spaniard. At Isfahan Frs. Vincent and Leander remained with Frs. Benignus and Redempt till the end of 1611, but in January 1612 (the last-named having been elected Superior in the absence of the Prior, Fr. John, in Astrakhan), Fr. Vincent accompanied by a lay brother set out for Hurmuz, where an oratory was at once adapted in a house and opened in accordance with a licence obtained by Fr. Benignus in a visit the latter had made in 1611 to Goa in order to collect funds.

With their increasing numbers monetary needs began to involve the Carmelites in difficulties at Isfahan and, as no sufficient Christian source in Persia itself was available and Europe too far off, it was perhaps natural for the Fathers to look to the generous Portuguese in the capital of their Indian possessions as a likely source for obtaining a regular supply. That and the idea of recruiting novices who in time might become Mass priests weighed most, it is to be presumed, with the protagonist of this development, Fr. Vincent of S. Francis, who already by April 1612 had gone on from Hurmuz to Goa. He was bearing from Rome for the